



DATE: November 4, 2015

AGENDA ITEM # 2

TO: Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission

FROM: Cedric Novenario, Transportation Services Manager

SUBJECT: Four cities coordinated Stevens creek trail feasibility study and joint cities working team recommendations

RECOMMENDATION

Review the Four Cities Coordinated Stevens Creek Trail Feasibility Study and Joint Cities Working Team Recommendations and provide feedback to Council on the Recommendations

BACKGROUND

Stevens Creek runs primarily north-south and travels through the Cities of Mountain View, Los Altos, Sunnyvale and Cupertino. The goal of the Stevens Creek Trail is to link the Bay Trail to the Ridge Trail and connect to the Skyline-to-the-Sea Trail that extends to the Pacific Ocean. From the northern end, the trail is complete from the San Francisco Bay to the Dale/Heatherstone overpass in Mountain View. In the southern end, the trail is complete from McClellan Road to Blackberry Farm in Cupertino.

The City of Sunnyvale adopted a policy in 1994 that prevented a regional trail connection within the Stevens Creek corridor in Sunnyvale. Because of this policy, the City of Los Altos conducted a Feasibility Study within City of Los Altos limits.

In 2008, the City of Los Altos accepted the Stevens Creek Trail Feasibility Study. This study focused on a link from the Stevens Creek Trail in Mountain View to a future connection in Cupertino. The purpose of that plan was to review options for extending the trail through Los Altos from Mountain View to Cupertino and to develop preferred alignments for the trail. That report studied five alternative alignments. Alternative 3, the Stevens Creek/Fremont Avenue Connector was determined to be the preferred alternative. Alternative 3 was, in part, chosen because it potentially provided the greatest access to the trail for Los Altos residents.

In the Spring of 2009, the City of Sunnyvale lifted its policy which allowed consideration of the Stevens Creek Trail from Mountain View to Cupertino within the creek corridor in Sunnyvale and modified its General Plan to allow the Stevens Creek Trail within the city limits, thus allowing its participation in the four cities effort with Mountain View, Los Altos and Cupertino. Mountain View was the lead agency for the initial four cities discussions. Once an agreement was reached to embark on a four cities Feasibility Study, Sunnyvale became the lead agency shepherding the process to secure funds, hire consultants and launch the study.

The Feasibility Study team consists of the following:

- Consultant Team
- Staff Advisory Team - five members of agency staff (one from each city and Santa Clara Valley Water District)
- Citizen Working Group - 12 citizens (three from each City, selected by the Policy Working Group through an application process)
- Policy Working Group - Four Council members (one from each Council) and one Santa Clara Valley Water District Board of Directors representative

Work on the current Feasibility Study began in mid-2012.

Feasibility Study

The purpose of the technical Feasibility Study is to provide an evaluation and analysis of potential alignments for completing the Stevens Creek Trail, based on objective and extensive investigation and research to support decision making. The final Feasibility Study does not include recommendations for preferred alignments.

With the goal of connecting completed portions of the Stevens Creek Trail in Mountain View and Cupertino, both working groups and City staff developed study parameters to help guide the consultant in developing the Feasibility Study. The study parameters were:

- Investigate public lands and right-of-ways
- Protect environmentally-sensitive habitats
- Seek routes that accommodate beginner bicyclists
- Develop direct routes that close trail gap
- Connect to parks, schools, shopping and on-street pedestrian and bike system

The Feasibility Study area focuses on public lands bounded by the following:

- North – Dale/Heatherstone Overcrossing
- East – Mary Avenue
- West – Grant Road and Rancho San Antonio County Park
- South – Stevens Creek Boulevard

Focusing within the bounded area allowed research into potential routes that may provide an experience that ranges from a fully separated facility in an open space area to a local road that serves as a connector to a trail head.

Study segments were defined within the boundaries. The study segments are:

1. Dale Avenue/Heatherstone Way to Fremont Avenue
2. Fremont Avenue to Homestead Road
3. Homestead Road to Stevens Creek Boulevard
4. Trail Connections to Rancho San Antonio County Park via Stevens Creek Boulevard

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Between November 2012 and February 2013, three public meetings were held to provide an overview of the purpose of the Feasibility Study and to obtain feedback regarding potential routes through Sunnyvale, Los Altos, and Cupertino. On June 18, 2013, a Los Altos-focused meeting was held at Grant Park Community Center. The focus of this meeting was to provide Los Altos residents an overview of the Feasibility Study, how the study affects Los Altos, a process update, and to solicit public feedback on three alternative configurations for consideration on Fallen Leaf Lane.

The Feasibility Study team also investigated potential crossing locations in late 2013 in the areas of: Foothill Expressway at Highway 280, a new Highway 280 Pedestrian Bridge west of State Route 85, and Stevens Creek Blvd at State Route 85.

In 2014, the Feasibility Study team met to recap the findings of the additional site investigations and to wrap-up potential trail routes for the study.

After personnel changes within the Feasibility Study team, the group reconvened in March 2015 and defined a process to wrap up the Feasibility Study and develop a recommendations report to be presented to each of the four cities for approval.

DISCUSSION

On Tuesday, October 27, 2015 a joint City Council and BPAC was held at Grant Park and Community Center. The purpose of the meeting was to provide both bodies background on both the Feasibility Study and the JCWT recommendations. The BPAC is requested to provide feedback to the Council regarding the JCWT recommendations. The information below was provided at the joint meeting and is provided again for the benefit of the commission.

The Feasibility Study team reconvened and defined a process to collect public feedback regarding a draft of the Feasibility Study and to develop recommendations for a preferred alignment for the Stevens Creek Trail. See Attachment 1 and 2 for the process map and the Feasibility Study.

On March 27, 2015, the draft Feasibility Study was released for public comment. By the end of the comment period in August 2015, 945 written comments were received. In addition to the written comments, there were seven opportunities after the study was released for the public to provide input regarding the Feasibility Study and potential trail alignments. There were three public meetings held in May and June 2015 and a total of four Citizen Working Group and Joint Cities Working Team (JCWT) meetings between June and August 2015. Technical comments related to the Feasibility Study were reviewed and incorporated as appropriate.

Citizens Working Group (CWG) Recommendations

On June 17, 2015, the CWG discussed the public comments received, including written and oral comments from the three public meetings. At this meeting, the CWG developed general alignment themes which helped guide its alignment recommendations. The alignment themes are:

- Extend the Stevens Creek Trail as a pedestrian/bike path as far south as possible to keep the trail separated from automobile traffic to the greatest extent possible in order to create a

family-friendly and recreational route that enhances the bicycle and pedestrian networks of the four cities

- Enhance the habitat along the creek corridor with development of the trail
- For existing bike routes that are in the area but not part of the recommended alignment, modest safety improvements should be considered

Based on the alignment themes, the CWG recommended preferred alignments for each study segment. Those preferred alignments are:

- Study Segment 1
 - Extend the Stevens Creek Trail through the 22 acres of open space along Stevens Creek/State Route 85
- Study Segment 2
 - Extend the Stevens Creek Trail as a separated off-street pedestrian/bike path along the soundwall on Bernardo Avenue.
 - If the Bernardo Avenue path is not feasible, the second choice is to incorporate modest enhancements to Bernardo, Belleville and Fallen Leaf for bicycle safety.
- Study Segment 3
 - A new grade-separated crossing on Interstate 280 to provide access to the Stevens Creek Trail on a direct route along low-volume, low-speed streets
- Study Segment 4
 - Extend a pedestrian/bike path west from Stonebridge to undeveloped open space land behind the Gate of Heaven Cemetery to provide access to Rancho San Antonio County Park.

A copy of the CWG recommendations is located in Attachment 3, and includes greater detail and discussion around each preferred study segment.

Joint Cities Working Team (JCWT) Recommendations

The JCWT met on July 24, August 5, and August 21, 2015 to discuss the Draft Feasibility Study, public feedback, written and oral comments, and the recommendations from the CWG. The JCWT made its recommendations as a regional body and considered the alignments through all the cities.

The JCWT made the following alignment recommendations:

- Study Segment 1
 - The preferred Stevens Creek Trail route in this segment is an off-street trail through existing 22-acre open space along Stevens Creek/State Route 85
- Study Segment 2
 - The preferred alignment is an off-street bike/pedestrian pathway on Bernardo Avenue including a bike/pedestrian overpass of Fremont Avenue at Bernardo Avenue.

- Conduct a detailed study to determine parking and traffic impacts on Bernardo Avenue to determine alignment feasibility by the City of Sunnyvale.
- Consider modest on-street bike/pedestrian improvements on Belleville Way and Fallen Leaf Lane consistent with each city's adopted bike/pedestrian plans. These improvements should be considered regardless if the Bernardo Avenue path is feasible or not and will not include specific signage relating to the Stevens Creek Trail.
- Study Segment 3
 - No off-street facility was recommended in this segment.
 - A recommendation was made to reach out to agencies such as Caltrans and Union Pacific Railroad to express interest in land availability for bike/pedestrian improvements should those agencies make modifications to their facilities or changes their land use.
 - Support widening the existing Homestead Road crossing at State Route 85 or building a separate parallel bike/pedestrian bridge to provide a connection to the existing off-street bike/pedestrian pathway on Homestead Road.
- Study Segment 4
 - The preferred route from Blackberry Farms to Rancho San Antonio County Park is a spur alignment which uses the existing Stevens Creek Boulevard on-street bike lanes and then continues west along the north side of Stevens Creek Boulevard starting near Stonebridge.

A detailed report of the JCWT recommendations and meetings is included in Attachment 4.

The culmination of the work of the entire Feasibility Study team was based on regional cooperation for regional benefit. Therefore, the following should be considered by the City Council:

- Support for the overall JCWT recommendations
- Support for modest improvements for the Los Altos portion of Segment 2 consistent with the Circulation Element of the General Plan and the Bicycle Transportation Plan (Attachments 5 and 6). The work recently completed on Newcastle Avenue is suggested as an example of improvements to be made on other streets.
- Support the City of Mountain View in the Stevens Creek Trail Master Planning for Segment 1
- Support the City of Sunnyvale for the Bernardo Avenue Parking and Traffic Impact Analysis
- Support the City of Cupertino should they pursue Stevens Creek Spur Trail to Rancho San Antonio Park

Attachments

1. Stevens Creek Trail Process Map
2. Four Cities Coordinated Stevens Creek Trail Feasibility Study
3. Citizens Working Group Recommendation Document
4. Four Cities Coordinated SCT Feasibility Study – JCWT Recommendations to the Councils
5. Figure C-4 Bikeways – Los Altos Circulation Element
6. Figure 5-2 Proposed Complete Bikeway Network – Los Altos Bicycle Transportation Plan